

SERVING NATURE AND YOU



Prairie-chickens at
The Nature Conservancy's
Dunn Ranch
NOPPADOL PAOTHONG



Annual **REVIEW**

FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2016-JUNE 30, 2017

On a regular basis and in many ways,
Missourians

make it clear they have a strong desire to protect and enhance our fish, forest, and wildlife resources. Whether it be in surveys, through participation in MDC events, visits to our conservation areas, or support of the revenue sources that fund MDC's work, Missourians show how much they value these resources.

And in return, MDC values that support. One way we show this appreciation is by maintaining an open and active line of communication with Missourians, and this annual review is one small, but important, tool in that effort. In the pages that follow, you will see the things most expect of an annual review – budget information, receipts, disbursements, etc. – but you will also see updates on the issues, challenges, and successes that highlight MDC's year from July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017.

Of course, nature doesn't function on a fiscal year, and many of the projects MDC undertakes are years – even decades – in the process, so you'll see familiar issues highlighted, such as chronic wasting disease and feral hogs, and successes, such as the continued growth of the state's elk herd and black bear population.

Since MDC's founding 80 years ago, its greatest successes have all sprung from its greatest challenges, and with the continued support of Missourians, we will continue to see success in protecting and enhancing our outdoor fortune for future generations.



Operating BUDGET

Missouri State Operating Budget

MDC represents less than 1 percent of the total state budget and **receives no state general revenue.**



TOTAL MISSOURI OPERATING BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

\$27,258,127,633

Health and Social Services

46.1%

Education

26.5%

Government Services

15.1%

Transportation

8.0%

Natural & Economic Resources

3.7%

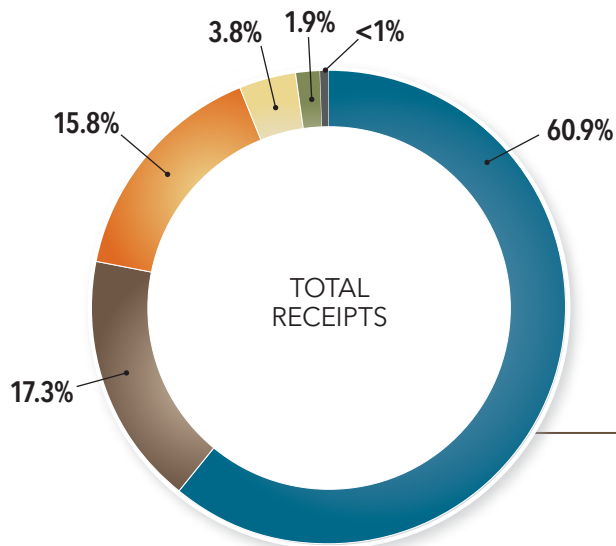
Conservation

0.6%





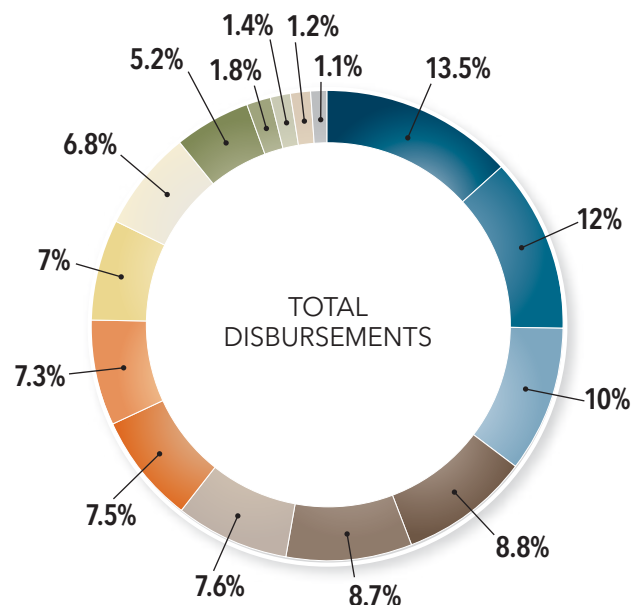
The Lewis Family, Dean, Anna Mae and David D. Lewis Memorial Conservation Area



MDC Receipts

MDC gets the majority of its funding through the **conservation sales tax**. For every \$8 spent on taxable items, one penny goes to conservation.

Conservation Sales Tax	\$117,077,413
Permit Sales	\$33,332,175
Federal Reimbursements	\$30,389,196
Sales and Rentals	\$7,334,881
Other Sources	\$3,728,665
Interest	\$497,741



MDC Disbursements

Funds are distributed throughout the divisions to accomplish the **top conservation priorities** across the state for MDC.

Capital Improvements	\$26,269,855
Wildlife	\$23,321,122
Forestry	\$19,484,706
Protection	\$17,114,454
Outreach and Education	\$16,934,745
Fisheries	\$14,713,215
Information Technology	\$14,569,544
Resource Science	\$14,144,548
Administrative Services	\$13,580,911
Design and Development	\$13,145,556
Private Land Services	\$10,072,100
Administration	\$3,536,712
Human Resources	\$2,732,923
Regional Public Contact Offices	\$2,285,273
County Assistance Payments	\$2,170,846

NOTE: Disbursements include capital improvements, retirement benefits, and other agency costs that are not appropriated in the MDC operating budget.

Sustaining and Improving FISH, FOREST, AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Identifying, Slowing the Spread of Chronic Wasting Disease

In an effort to track and slow the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD), a degenerative brain disease that threatens Missouri's white-tailed deer herd, MDC conducted its first mandatory CWD sampling of all deer harvested during opening weekend of the 2016 firearms season within a 29-county management zone.

As a result of the more than 25,500 samples taken during the 2016–2017 sampling season, including 19,200 samples collected at MDC's 75 sampling stations during opening weekend, researchers were able to identify nine new cases of CWD, including cases in Jefferson and St. Clair counties, where the condition had not been seen previously.

In response to the 2016–2017 sampling results, and because of the detection of CWD in hundreds of deer in northwest Arkansas near the Missouri border, MDC expanded the CWD Management Zone from 29 to 41 counties. Hunters in 25 of those counties were again required to present their harvest for sampling during opening weekend of the 2017 firearms deer season.



"While we did detect CWD in a few new areas of the state, including Jefferson and St. Clair counties, the fact that we found a low number of positives is great news and indicates CWD remains relatively rare in Missouri."

— Jasmine Batten, MDC
wildlife disease coordinator



MDC staff take a sample from a harvested deer at a CWD station.

Elk Herd Continues Growth

Missouri's elk herd, which is the result of an MDC reintroduction effort, continues its steady growth, according to research conducted by MDC and the universities of Missouri and Montana.

Researchers captured 57 elk, including 17 bulls, 38 cows, and two calves, on MDC and National Park Service lands in Carter, Shannon, and Reynolds counties as part of an ongoing monitoring program to determine the herd's overall health, growth, and mobility. The study found 91 percent of the adult cows and 50 percent of the yearling cows to be pregnant, which is a good indicator of continued herd growth. MDC estimates Missouri's elk population at 180–185.

White-tailed deer



Feral Hog Eradication Effort Sees Success Through Partnership

A growing group of conservation and agricultural organizations have allied themselves with MDC in the ongoing effort to eradicate the invasive and destructive feral hog population from Missouri's landscape.

Buoyed by a grant from the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, MDC equipped the state's feral hog strike team with additional trapping equipment and resources to educate the public about the dangers posed by and damage done by feral hogs.

MDC has focused its efforts on large-scale traps capable of capturing entire sounders, or groups of hogs. The results of the trapping have been promising, as the recorded numbers of hogs trapped and killed has increased significantly over previous years.

Feral hogs are not wildlife and are a serious threat to Missouri's fish, forest, and wildlife resources, as well as to agricultural resources.

"We've built significantly on our progress from 2016. We continue to engage private landowners and partners in efforts to report hog sightings, continue trapping, and deter hog hunting and the illegal release of hogs, and that's why we're seeing growing success."

— Alan Leary, wildlife management coordinator

Black Bear Study Continues

Once nearly wiped out of Missouri, the black bear has made a comeback over the past several decades, and MDC is making a concerted, long-term commitment to tracking and understanding the size and health of the state's black bear population.

Black bear



In February and March 2017, MDC's furbearer program visited 15 black bear dens to determine the reproductive status of sows. The team successfully handled six litters, weighing, measuring, and tagging the cubs and yearlings, and observed from a distance the young of those dens where researchers could not handle the animals to get more precise information.

The winter black bear den visits allow researchers to track how many cubs survive from year to year, an important element in determining the growth rate of Missouri's bear population.

Elk Tourism Boosts Economy

Areas near Missouri's elk restoration zone in the state's south-central region have seen an economic boost of nearly \$1.3 million tied to the reintroduction of elk to the area, according to a study conducted by MDC.

Based on 800 visitor surveys, it was estimated that over 22,000 visits were made to the area in 2016. Researchers determined that 89 percent of the visitors to Peck Ranch Conservation Area and 27 percent of visitors to Current River Conservation Area were there specifically to view elk.

"The population is growing slowly and is showing signs of increased calf production. The next couple of years will be exciting ones for elk in Missouri."

— Aaron Hildreth, cervid biologist



Elk



Bald eagle

Bald Eagle Survey

The removal of the bald eagle from the threatened and endangered species list is considered a triumph of American conservation efforts, but there is still work to do to track the bald eagle's recovery throughout its range.

MDC, working with the monitoring plan developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, conducted a modified eagle survey in early 2017 to determine the progress of the bald eagle breeding population in Missouri. This additional effort allowed researchers to check eagle nests that had not been surveyed in several years.

Missouri Natural Areas System Celebrates 40th Anniversary

While some people dread their 40th birthday, MDC celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Missouri Natural Areas System in 2017.

The natural areas system, established in 1977 in partnership with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR), was created to identify and preserve the last and best examples of the state's prairies, forests, woodlands, savannas, glades, wetlands, and caves.

The system, which has grown to include 188 special areas totaling 87,222 acres of land and water, represents key pieces of Missouri's natural heritage. It is now recognized by a partnership, the Missouri Natural Areas Committee, consisting of its original members — MDC and DNR — along with the Mark Twain National Forest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, and The Nature Conservancy.



Sedge wren



Eastern hellbender larva



Pallid sturgeon

Missouri River Field Station Helps Endangered Pallid Sturgeon

More than 100 volunteers, working with MDC from the Missouri River Field Station, caught 62 pallid sturgeon as part of an ongoing program to replenish the population of the endangered fish.

Of the 62 pallid sturgeon caught, five were sent to state and federal hatcheries for use as brood stock. The offspring of these adults will be stocked back into the Missouri River after they reach a year old. Over the course of the nine-year program, 86 adult pallid sturgeon have been sent to hatcheries, resulting in the production of 81,375 pallid sturgeon for restocking in the river.

Zoo-Raised Hellbenders Released to Ozark Rivers

During 2016, MDC and the St. Louis Zoo released 1,310 zoo-raised Ozark and eastern hellbenders into their native Ozark rivers.

These hellbenders, which were raised from eggs collected in the wild or were the result of the captive breeding program at the zoo, will be monitored to determine the success of augmenting captive-reared hellbenders in the wild.

Eastern hellbender



Least bittern

MDC Studies Marsh Bird Habitat, Migration

MDC completed two studies in 2016 investigating the habitat needs and migration patterns of migratory water birds, including rails and bitterns.

The first study, which looked at 107 publicly owned wetlands across the state, determined that MDC's wetland management activities are providing for the needs of spring migrating and nesting rails and bitterns. Such species are dependent on emergent marsh habitat, such as cattails and bulrushes.

The second study looked at the timing of the fall migration of different varieties of rails. Identifying a species' migration pattern is important so management activities can be timed to provide the birds with the best possible habitats when they are needed most.

Combined, the results of the two studies provide wetland managers a better understanding of these migratory marsh birds, allowing managers to tailor their wetland management strategies to better meet the species' needs.

Projects Track Deer Movement, Survival

MDC is continuing two studies using satellite technology to track white-tailed deer movement in southeast, northwest, and Ozark regions of Missouri.

In the southeast Missouri counties of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Stoddard, and Wayne, MDC is using GPS collars to track deer movement in agricultural areas. The project is aimed at developing strategies for minimizing crop damage from deer.

Meanwhile, in the glaciated plains of north Missouri and in the Ozark mountains of south Missouri, MDC is working with the University of Missouri to determine the survival rates and movement of deer in these contrasting landscapes.



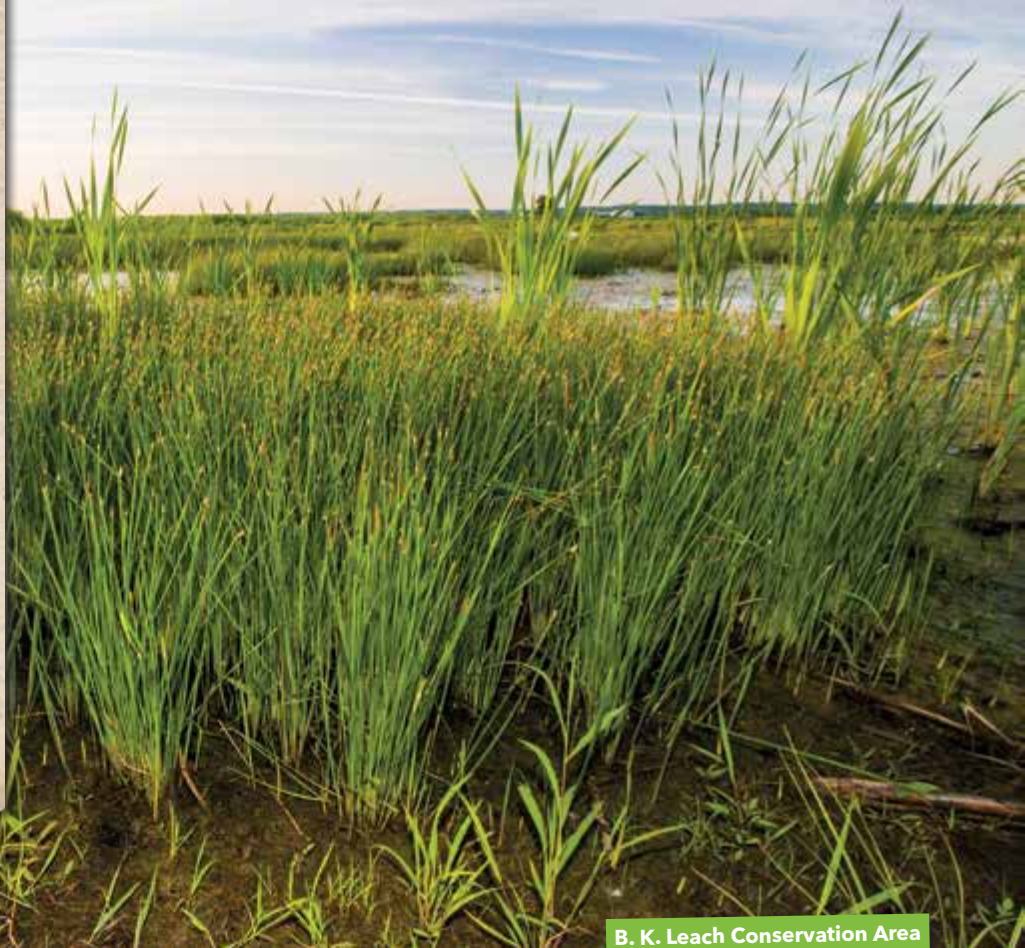
White-tailed deer



Study Confirms Positive Results of Wetlands Restoration Program

A study using satellite imagery and aerial surveys has confirmed an increase in the amount and quality of wetland habitats, which are vital to migrating waterfowl.

The six-year study, funded by MDC, compared publicly and privately owned wetlands restored through the Wetland Reserve Easement Program to natural wetland habitats in the floodplains of the Missouri and Grand rivers. The study found 60 percent of the restored wetlands had water on them during the fall waterfowl migration, compared to 30 percent of the natural wetlands that still had water on them during the same time.



B. K. Leach Conservation Area

Forest Products Industry Contributes \$9.9 Billion to Economy

Missouri's timber products industry contributes \$9.9 billion annually to the state's economy, according to an MDC study.

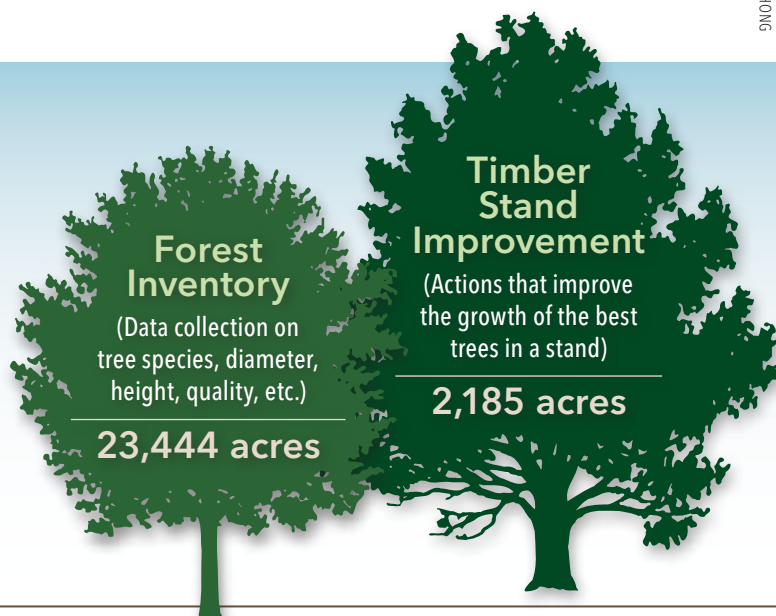
MDC analysts, working with data from Missouri wood producers and federal economic databases, found that over 132.1 million cubic feet of wood was harvested from forests in 2015, the most recent data available. This harvest supported nearly 47,000 jobs with a total payroll over \$2.3 billion.

In FY17, MDC Fisheries Division staff responded to 2,319 requests for watershed, floodplain, riparian corridor, stream, or lake management technical assistance.

B. K. LEACH: NOPPADOL PRATHONG

MDC-Owned Forests by the Numbers

MDC manages about **700,000 acres** of forested land in the state. Forest types, by acre, are:



Topeka Shiner Restoration Continues

As part of an ongoing reintroduction program, MDC hatcheries raised 36,626 Topeka shiners for release in northeast Missouri.

Working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy, MDC released the endangered minnow into three streams and five nursery ponds at Union Ridge Conservation Area, building upon previous stocking in the Spring Creek watershed.

The Topeka shiner, a small minnow that lives in small to midsize prairie streams in the central United States, was designated a federally endangered species in 1998. Populations of the Topeka shiner have steadily declined, and the species now occupies only 15 percent of its former range in Missouri.



Topeka shiner



Greater prairie-chicken

Partnerships Help Restore Prairie-Chicken Populations, Habitats

An interstate partnership of conservation agencies and private landowners has proven successful in expanding the number and range of prairie-chickens in northern Missouri and southern Iowa.

MDC, working with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and the Blank Park Zoo of Des Moines, completed the five-year project to increase the population and genetic diversity of the greater prairie-chicken within the Grand River Grasslands Priority Geography Area, which includes portions of Harrison County, Missouri, and neighboring Ringgold County, Iowa.

In coordination with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, project staff captured and relocated 500 prairie-chickens to the Grand River Grasslands. In addition, MDC has worked with private landowners in Harrison County to expand and improve the grasslands, which not only has resulted in an expansion of prairie-chicken habitat, but has increased quail and pheasant populations as well.

Timber Harvest

(Responsibly harvesting trees gives healthiest trees room to grow and promotes wildlife habitat)

6,236 acres

Woodland Restoration

(Actions that restore woodland areas)

5,844 acres

Invasive Plant Control

(Removing or treating invasive plants that disrupt habitat)

6,350 acres

Prescribed Fire

(Carefully controlled fire to encourage plant diversity)

7,007 acres

Connecting Citizens TO FISH, FOREST, AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES



Reeling in New Anglers

Whether by providing knowledge, equipment, or opportunity, MDC continues its efforts to bring the joys of fishing to more Missourians every year.

Through the Discover Nature—Fishing program, MDC staff and volunteers held more than 200 classes, drawing more than 5,200 participants. Working with experienced anglers, participants learned the basics of equipment, skills, fish habits and habitats, and fishing rules and regulations.

For those interested in fishing but who are not ready to invest in the equipment, MDC continues to sponsor the rod and reel loaner program. Prospective anglers can borrow basic fishing equipment from one of 90 locations throughout the state. Loaner locations can be found online at short.mdc.mo.gov/24X.

For those who might be tentative about just grabbing a pole and heading off on their own, MDC, working with sponsors and volunteers, also provided numerous organized fishing events throughout the state. Nearly 11,000 people of all ages and backgrounds participated in more than 160 MDC fishing events.

Archery Program Welcomes 600th School

New Madrid County R-1 Middle School became the 600th school to participate in the Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program (MoNASP). At a ceremony Feb. 3, MDC officials presented the school with a check for \$1,500, and the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation presented the school with a \$1,700 check to cover costs of equipment for the program.

MoNASP, which by the end of the past school year was in 628 schools and included nearly 179,000 participants, has been shown to improve school attendance, increase self-esteem, increase physical activity, and encourage youth to pursue more activities outdoors.



"We are thrilled to be recognized as the 600th Missouri school to participate. Our students and their parents are even more excited than the school personnel because it made them feel that they were a part of something really special."

*— Dr. Sam Duncan,
New Madrid R-1 superintendent*



Tree City USA Celebrates 40th Anniversary

MDC celebrated the 40th anniversary of Tree City USA, a nationwide program that recognizes communities that promote the beneficial contributions of trees.

A total of 95 Missouri communities — representing almost 43 percent of the state's population — have earned the Tree City USA designation. In recognition of the program's 40th anniversary, MDC announced a goal of adding 40 new Missouri communities to the Tree City USA program over the next five years.

To earn the Tree City designation, a community must maintain a tree board or department, establish a tree care ordinance, develop a community forestry program, and celebrate Arbor Day each year. Missouri Tree City participants range from Kansas City, with a population of 467,000, to Augusta, with a population of 249 people.

In 2016, Missouri Tree City USA communities invested \$20 million in tree and forest management, including tree inventories, pruning, planting, hazard assessment, education, and planning.



Agents Embody Community Engagement

The community involvement of conservation agents is essential for educating all citizens on the value of healthy fish, forest, and wildlife resources.



5,180 meetings with civic groups, schools, church groups, and other organizations

7,967 radio and TV programs

2,199 news articles published

1,957 public exhibits presented

9 Discover Nature Girls Camps across the state

Volunteers Providing Programs

The work of MDC is multiplied by the dedicated corps of more than 1,800 volunteers statewide who share MDC's passion for protecting Missouri's fish, forest, and wildlife resources.



VOLUNTEERS by the Numbers

124 shooting range volunteers

251 fishing education volunteers

886 hunter/bowhunter education volunteers

426 nature center and interpretive site volunteers

135 protection volunteers

2,700 members of the Missouri Forestkeepers Network



Missouri Stream Teams provide a great service statewide. The program was presented with the Ernest Thompson Seton Award from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Stream Team contributions by the numbers:

4,435 Stream Teams statewide

141,712 volunteer hours

1,095 water quality monitoring trips

534 tons of trash removed

7,550 trees planted



Missouri also benefits from the Master Naturalist program.



12 Master Naturalist chapters

67,000 hours of volunteer service in 2016

\$1.75 million economic value



Enhancing OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND SUPERIOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Managing Public Lands, Assisting Private Landowners

MDC manages more than 900 properties, totaling over 1 million acres statewide, dedicated to restoring and conserving Missouri's fish, forest, and wildlife resources and to providing outdoor opportunities for Missourians. This year, MDC staff worked on habitat management on more than 206,000 acres of public land, including wetland, woodlands, forest, savanna, cropland (through permittee farmers and food plots), grassland prairies, old field, and glades. Every property MDC oversees is operated under a written management plan, and MDC seeks public comment on each of these plans as they are updated. In FY17, staff posted 145 area plans online, seeking public comment.

MDC manages what seems to be a significant amount of property, but the vast majority of land in the state is privately owned. To further MDC's mission, staff works extensively with private landowners. In FY17, staff held or participated in 226 habitat management workshops, field days, and technical training sessions for more than 20,548 private landowners. The workshops focused on a range of habitat management techniques to benefit all wildlife, healthy forests, and clean water. In addition to these group events, MDC provided timely and responsive service to landowners through 20,050 rural and urban contacts, including 7,978 onsite visits. Staff also assisted landowners seeking help with habitat management plans, including writing or reviewing 2,373 habitat management plans during FY17.



MDC Issues Missouri Conservation Permit Card

In April, MDC rolled out the Missouri Conservation Permit Card, a new and convenient way for hunters, anglers, and trappers to carry and show proof of most related permits.

The plastic cards are more durable than paper permits, and updated permit information, such as the purchase of a new permit, is automatically assigned to the cards. Some types of hunting, such as deer and turkey, and some types of fishing, such as trout, require additional permits and tags.

Cardholders can personalize their card by selecting from one of four nature-inspired backgrounds: bass, buck, mallard duck, or bluebird. For more information, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/Z5p.





185,036**
hard-copy
subscribers
(from all 50
states and
22 foreign
countries)

Telling Nature's Stories

Nature communicates in many ways, from the cricket's chirp to the coyote's cry, and MDC has many ways to communicate nature's stories, from traditional print media to the latest social media. In FY17, MDC also began streaming Conservation Commission meetings live on the internet.



524,205**
hard-copy
subscribers (from
all 50 states, two
U.S. territories,
and 28 foreign
countries); 23,534**
online subscribers

Conservation Agents Serving Their Communities

During the record flash flooding events last spring, agents responded to numerous calls for service from local citizens and county officials. To save lives and property, agents in southern Missouri assisted with over 300 swift water rescues and countless evacuation operations.



SOCIAL MEDIA by the Numbers



4.6 million*
unique visitors to
MDC's website



240,982**
Facebook fans



10,800**
Twitter followers



6,128**
Instagram followers



11,420**
YouTube subscribers

9 public channels**

1,861 videos**

11.5 million views**



360,513**
email/text notification
subscribers



51* news and
events articles
monthly (average)



2,500* video
entries on external
web sites (YouTube,
Facebook, etc.)

18 million*
total views



4* MDC Wild
Webcasts on key
conservation topics

* FY17 totals

** As of June 30, 2017

Increasing Citizen Access **TO FISH, FOREST, AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES**



Bringing People and Pollinators Together

The monarch butterfly is in crisis, and MDC continues to work with partner organizations and the public to grow monarch habitat and draw attention to challenges faced by this iconic butterfly.

In recognition of National Pollinator Week, the Missouri Conservation Commission participated in a pollinator habitat planting ceremony at its June meeting in St. Louis. In Jefferson City, more than 1,400 people attended Monarch Mania at the Runge Conservation Nature Center. Monarch Mania, hosted by MDC and including more than a dozen conservation partners, was the second-largest event ever held at Runge. In addition,

MDC offered cost-share and incentive partnerships with USDA and USFWS to establish over 4,000 acres of monarch habitat, which benefits many other pollinators as well.

To support MDC's monarch efforts, staff at the George O. White State Nursery have been working with MDC's volunteer coordinators to grow milkweed for planting on state lands. The volunteer coordinators work with master naturalists to collect milkweed seeds, which are then planted at the nursery. This year, the effort generated about 48,000 plants.

BUTTERFLY NETTING: NOPPADOL PAOTIHOANG;
PLANTING CEREMONY: DAV ZARENGA



Missouri Outdoor Recreational Access Program Continues Growth

Following up on the initial success of the Missouri Outdoor Recreational Access Program (MRAP), MDC plans to expand the program, which allows public access to participating private lands.

MRAP, which was piloted in 2015 and implemented statewide in 2016, compensates private landowners to allow access for hunting and fishing opportunities for Missourians. It was implemented statewide in 2016 with 8,400 acres enrolled on 37 properties. The program requires landowners to provide suitable wildlife habitat in exchange for a \$15–\$25 per acre access incentive. The results have been very positive, with most users satisfied with their experience while hunting deer, quail, and other game. MDC plans to expand the program to 15,000 acres in 2018.

Participating landowners determine the type of public access/activities they want to allow on their property by selecting one of the six MRAP public access options: all access hunting and fishing; archery hunting; fishing; small game and turkey hunting; wildlife viewing; and youth hunting and fishing. MRAP rules and a list of participating properties are available online at mdc.mo.gov/mrap.

"MRAP opens up new opportunities for guys like me and my family who are willing to try new things and put in the work. In the future, I hope to see even more land in the program."

— Ryan Dierker, Missouri resident hunter



Hatcheries Stock Missouri Waterways With Opportunities

Whether you're one of the hundreds of Missouri anglers standing shoulder to shoulder in a Missouri trout park on opening day or a parent wanting to share the joys of fishing with your children from the bank of a community lake, there's a good chance MDC fish hatcheries contributed to your day's catch.

Last year, Missouri's warm-water hatcheries stocked 3.4 million fish in public waters, ranging from 2.2 million fry and fingerling walleye to 14,766 hybrid sunfish stocked throughout the state for children's fishing clinics. The state's cold-water hatcheries stocked nearly 1.3 million trout, including at the state's four trout parks, 12 stream special management areas, and Lake Taneycomo.

While MDC supports and promotes fishing at many conservation areas and public river and stream accesses, it also supports local fishing through agreements with 122 governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide fisheries expertise and management at nearly 250 lakes, streams, and related waterbodies. MDC also stocked 65 urban lakes with more than 145,000 keeper-sized fish.



Top Conservation Stories

2016-2017



Conservation Commission Names Sara Parker Pauley Director of the Missouri Department of Conservation

The Missouri Conservation Commission selected Sara Parker Pauley as MDC's ninth director, effective Nov. 1, 2016. She is the first female director in MDC's 80-year history.

"As a lifelong conservationist, hunter, and outdoorswoman, Sara Parker Pauley appreciates and understands the value of Missouri's fish, forest, and wildlife resources," said Conservation Commissioner Dave Murphy. "Sara has a breadth of experience and a proven track record of success to lead the department."



Sara Parker Pauley was sworn in as director on Nov. 1 by Missouri Supreme Court Judge Laura Denvir Stith. Next to Sara is her husband, Scott.

MDC Biologists Document Endangered Species

MDC biologists are documenting reproduction of the endangered grotto sculpin in Perry County caves. The grotto sculpin is a small cave fish that is only found in Perry County. It is also unique because the species seems to be currently evolving. They have varying levels of pigment, and some have eyes while others don't, as the species adapts to cave conditions. MDC has researched the rare fish for well over a decade, but the current research project is focused on assessing population numbers and status, which includes reproduction.

This is significant because nest sites of these endangered fish have not been documented before, said Jason Crites, MDC fisheries management biologist. In the past it was presumed grotto sculpin spawning occurred in winter months. This is the first time reproduction of these endangered fish is documented deep within the caves.



"Of all the places in the world, grotto sculpin are only known to live here in Perry County. This is very exciting as we learn more about these fish, what their needs are, and how we can protect them."

— Jason Crites, MDC fisheries management biologist



Conservation Commission Approves Changes to Smallmouth, Rock Bass Regulations

The Missouri Conservation Commission gave approval for regulation changes related to smallmouth bass and rock bass. The regulation created a standard 15-inch minimum length limit for smallmouth bass and a daily limit of one for all Smallmouth Bass Special Management areas. The regulation also set a statewide length limit of 7 inches for rock bass (also called goggle-eye, warmouth, Ozark bass, and shadow bass) and removed the Osage Fork of the Gasconade River from the Rock Bass Special Management areas. The regulation changes are based on extensive scientific research related to bass populations and harvest and consideration of public input received during nine public meetings held by MDC.



MDC and CFM Thank Deer Hunters for Sharing the Harvest

MDC and the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM) thank the 4,280 Missouri deer hunters who donated 198,277 pounds of venison to the state's Share the Harvest program during the 2016–2017 deer season. The donated deer meat helped feed hungry Missourians all around the state. Share the Harvest is coordinated by MDC and CFM. Deer hunters donate their extra venison to participating meat processors throughout the state, who grind the deer meat into one-pound packages. The packaged venison is then given to food banks and pantries for distribution to Missourians in need of food assistance.

Special Events Celebrate Great Missouri Birding Trail

MDC and the Missouri Bird Conservation Foundation invited birders and others interested in birds to special events in May celebrating the completion of the Great Missouri Birding Trail. The Great Missouri Birding Trail is not a physical trail, but a website, greatmissouribirdingtrail.com, for beginner and seasoned birders to find and explore the “best of the best” places to bird-watch around Missouri. The website includes an interactive map of the best birding sites across the Show-Me State with information on various aspects of bird conservation. Pages include birding tips, beginner basics, landscaping, and property improvements for birds, and how to get involved with local bird organizations.



MDC Works on Flood-Damaged River Accesses

MDC continued evaluating and repairing river and stream accesses damaged by 2017 spring flooding. Most flood damage occurred to MDC accesses in the Ozarks on the Current River, North Fork of the White River, and the Gasconade River. Most accesses were reported repaired by the end of the summer, but some remained closed due to extensive damage.

Spring flooding damaged the Patrick Bridge Access at Althea Spring and the North Fork of the White River.

